

House Republican Press Release

February 18, 2005
Press Office: 860-240-8700

Legislation Introduced by Rep. Stripp Would Contribute to Healthier, Safer Schools



State Representative John E. Stripp, R-135th District, today urged support for legislation (House Bill 5187) he introduced recently that would contribute to healthier, safer schools for students, faculty and staff throughout Connecticut.

The bill, which has been referred to the state legislature's Education Committee, would require that local boards of education prepare separate budgets for operations, facility maintenance and capital projects and that each of those budget components be approved independently from other sections of the overall budget. In addition, the measure would prohibit school boards from transferring funds from any of the independent components to other areas of the budget without authorization by the entity that originally approved them.

"Over the years, the state has provided millions in school construction grants to local school districts to help them pay for the construction of new schools and the renovation and expansion of existing ones. Local property taxpayers also pay a significant share of the costs to retire local bond issues for school construction projects. For the most part, these projects are necessary and long-overdue," Representative Stripp said.

"While local Boards of Education have acted responsibly by supporting new school construction projects in their towns when the need is obvious, it is also an unfortunate fact that many of them are less conscientious when it comes to properly maintaining those facilities," Representative Stripp said.

"When school boards put their budgets together, they usually include enough to cover routine maintenance and emergency repairs. However, although proper maintenance is essential to keeping our schools safe and healthy places to teach and learn, popular programs always have more vocal defenders than inanimate school buildings. When money budgeted for such programs runs short, the temptation for school board members to cover shortfalls by taking funds earmarked for facility maintenance can become overpowering," Representative Stripp said.

"The result is deferred maintenance, which causes buildings to deteriorate and equipment to break down more quickly than would be the case if they were cared for properly in the first place. In the end, local school districts end up paying more for major renovation

projects and emergency equipment replacement than they would if routine maintenance had been performed on a regular basis,” Representative Stripp said.

“Maintenance deficiencies also can result in unforeseen health and safety hazards,” Representative Stripp said. “Poorly maintained heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems in schools can create conditions that foster the spread of mold and bacteria that can aggravate respiratory problems such as asthma and cause cold and flu outbreaks. When roof repair or replacement projects are put off too long, serious leaks can develop which can cause structural damage and create major safety hazards.”

“If my bill passes, it will help keep our children safe and healthy - and protect the investment we make in the school buildings where they acquire the knowledge and skills they need to become successful adults,” Representative Stripp said.